

## **CORE VALUES EDUCATION LTD:**

REPORT OF VISIT TO: Woodlands Community School

DATE: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025.



### **Focus: Personal Development and student leadership.**

The purpose of the visit was to review aspects of the Personal Development curriculum, and the student leadership plans and opportunities within the school.

#### **Conversation with the Assistant Headteacher for PD and student leadership:**

Line manages PHSE, Careers and Extra Curricular coordinator. There is a broad and inclusive programme of PD. The intention is well planned, thoughtfully structured and carefully sequenced.

The monitoring of the programmes and their implementation is developing but is not consistent. This creates a degree of uncertainty about the quality and consistency of the implementation.

The student leadership plans are advancing, and some are already being implemented. The leadership ties are a good example of a scheme which is embracing student leadership, encouraging more students to participate and raising the profile of student leaders around the school.

The structure for student leaders from year 11 to year 7 is evolving. Working on as many opportunities to include meaningful leadership opportunities for students across the school. There are leadership opportunities in catering, the environment, transition, assemblies, interviewing for staff, welcoming visitors... At present these exist for mainly year 11 students. There are sub prefects in year 10 to fill gaps left by year 11 and offer additional support where needed.

There is a school council which has 2 tutor reps from each tutor group. This council has a maximum membership of 70, It is rare that all attend and the number at any meeting varies between 30 – 40 students. There have been some successes for the council around dinner time arrangements and student voice. The question would be is this the most efficient way of structuring the council when just over 50% attend at any one time.

There is a House system where each house has a captain who works alongside the members of staff to produce competitions, charity events and assemblies. There is healthy competition between the houses in appoints based system.

There is a small, committed group of student leaders at present and the aspiration is to grow both the quantity and the quality.

### **Conversation with the Careers coordinator:(from a year ago)**

*Kinga is the new careers coordinator at the college. She has strong **intentions** to cover the programme of study for the students. There is a scheme of work which she has mapped out based on 3 lessons per year, per year group which is delivered as part of the PHSE programme, and the R period is used to complement this. There is a careers officer who works one day a week and does individual interviews with the students in key stage 4.*

*The **implementation** of the careers programme is very difficult to quality assure:*

- *There are a large number of teachers involved in the delivery across the key stages.*
- *There are a number of instances where the teacher has changed at least once during the year.*
- *The lessons only happen once every fortnight and can often be missed meaning there is a gap of 4 weeks between lessons.*
- *Each year the delivery group changes hence there is no relationship between the students and teacher which enables the discussion of sensitive/personal issues to be fully explored.*
- *The engagement of the staff from the pupil perspective is variable, 'it depends who you get and their interest in making the experience valuable'*
- *Lessons take place all round the school on different days and different times making monitoring and QA impossible for the coordinator.*
- *There is a presence about careers in the corridor areas of all departments, the quality is variable. A strong example is in science and ICT.*

*The **impact** of the this is:*

- *That the students recognise the strengths where the provision is well planned e.g. careers interviews, taster sessions for options, taster days colleges,*
- *However, they feel that this input is too infrequent, often rushed and not always valued by the person delivering the lessons.*
- *It feels low status in the schools list of priorities, but the students think it should have a much higher status.*
- *There are many topics that the students want to explore around the work, finance, planning, budgeting for example that they feel would lead them to making better and more informed choices.*

### **Potential areas for Development:**

- *Review the curriculum model for PHSE/careers in terms of curriculum time and the staffing. Look at a tutor led model with the whole school having the same period on the same day at the same time.*
- *Revisit the cross curricular contribution and embed careers into lessons throughout the school.*
- *Share the careers report issued to the year10 students with the HOY and the tutor.*
- *Link the potential earnings range, the skills and qualifications needed to the careers that are suggested by department in their displays to stimulate discussion and questions for the students.*
- *Develop the online communication about careers information and events through the website and social media.*

Approximately one year ago I met with Kinga and a number of the areas for development have been implemented. The momentum, aspiration and ambition have been maintained, careers lessons, careers interviews, work experience, college taster days are all established in the PD curriculum. This carries a considerable workload. The careers coordinator is committed and hardworking and determined to drive up quality.

At present I feel there is a lack of resource in the time given to organise and then monitor the quality of the implementation. Given this resource I am clear that the information gathered, and subsequent evaluation would further develop this crucial part of the PD curriculum which the students really value.

### **Interview with student leaders:**

5 student leaders/ prefects were interviewed, and these are the significant points made:

- All the student leaders thoroughly enjoy their roles and opportunities in school.
- They are keen to develop their roles and take on more given the opportunity.
- The majority have significant leadership opportunities outside of school.
- They really like the new tie system for both the aspiration to reach three stripes and the fact that it enhances the visibility of the leaders in school.
- The prefects are really looking forward to the opportunity to become senior prefects but are not sure about the process of how and when this will happen.
- They feel that there are not enough opportunities and roles available at present to make a difference.
- They feel that the culture in the school is changing, and more people are ready and willing to step up to student leadership.
- The badge systems in school have made achieving and participating more visible.
- The R points are welcomed and valued.
- Rewards for student leaders are really appreciated and help to build relationships between the students and the adults.
- Students feel there is a need for the whole student leadership opportunities across the school to start earlier, the year 7 student was at pains to point out what they had done as a year 6 student and now felt that these skills and experiences were not being valued.

### **Interviews with students who were reluctant to engage in extracurricular and leadership activities.**

Eight year 9 students were interviewed, and these are the significant points made:

- The majority of students have significant responsibilities outside of school and they take up most of what might be considered their spare time.
- They feel they are not lazy or uncommitted but either have their time filled with the above or choose to use it in other ways.
- They may be persuaded to join in student leadership activities if they felt more included and were clearer about what the opportunities and pathways were.
- A number of the clubs and opportunities start but both the adults and the students lose focus and commitment. Example Inspire club has 30 students but there are only 2 now attending.
- They feel that some more activities provided by non-school organisations like the Saints Foundation give a different focus.
- Students feel enormous time pressures particularly with the content of the GCSE courses at key stage 4. Homework time and expectations are huge.
- These students are more reluctant to wear badges and ties to model the cultural shift but with a bit of focus I think are winnable.

**Potential Areas for development:**

- A wider set of opportunities and responsibilities for students to engage with. Leaders of the school values, subject leaders, pastoral leaders, transition, community....
- The opportunities to be available all the way down the school under the leadership of senior prefects, who themselves have built their knowledge and skills from engagement lower down the school.
- A clear vision and structure chart about how all these opportunities fit together so the students can see what they can get involved in and the contribution they can make.
- Additional resources are required to enable the further development of high quality careers and work experience.
- Consider giving PHSE including careers additional curriculum time. The students have a desire to engage with many of the topics at greater depth.
- Consider the role of SLT in supporting and enhancing the PHSE curriculum time to evaluate commitment and quality.